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ABSTRACT

The paper charts problems and issues involved in serving bilingual handicapped students, and proposes a framework for educating culturally diverse children. Among issues touched upon are those of group identity vs. national unity, use of the native language vs. English, introduction of the second language into the curriculum, and teacher preparation. The authors propose a framework which takes into account cultural background, teacher characteristics and preparation, and the learning process. Implications for the Teacher Education Division (TED) of The Council for Exceptional Children include that TED should encourage further research on the topic, promote affirmative action in the employment of minority individuals, and advocate improved services for bilingual handicapped students. (CL)

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Problems and Issues in Educating Bilingual Handicapped Children
With Implications for Teacher Education

Over one-half decade ago, the U. S. Congress declared that all handicapped children must be provided a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Now we have come to reflect upon some problems and issues centered around providing bilingual handicapped children a quality education.

The education of bilingual handicapped children has become a major concern in the education arena. Involved in the movement to obtain quality education for bilingual handicapped children have been legislations, litigations, state and local governments, parent and professional organizations, and of course, the general public. Each group has made unique contributions toward the attainment of a very worthwhile goal. To mention a few gains, a provision of P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, requires that a handicapped child must be tested in his native language or mode of communication when being evaluated for placement in a special education class.

The 1974 Lau vs. Nichols Supreme Court decision serves as an example of how litigations have impacted upon programs for linguistically different children. The resulting decision from this court case was that a monolingual curriculum denies equal educational opportunity and equal protection under the law and that schools must provide opportunities for learning in the students' native language (Baca, 1980). Many state and local governments have provisions in their educational policies and procedural manuals which address measures for nondiscriminatory testing and evaluation of culturally diverse handicapped children.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has taken action relative to the problem by establishing an office of minority affairs at the national

headquarters. Also make note that CEC is sponsoring this conference on the bilingual handicapped child. As a component of CEC, the Teacher Education Division (TED) is revealing through this position paper its concerns for meeting the educational needs of bilingual handicapped children.

There are occurrences in special education which make it necessary for professional organizations to be concerned about the education of minority children. In an interview Dr. Funchigami (Ombudsman for minority individuals, 1978) stated that minority children constitute a disproportionately larger percentage of the handicapped population and that it is suspected that critical issues in special education such as identification, placement, due process, instructional strategies, and curriculum adaptation frequently touch the lives of minority children more adversely than non-minority children.

The purpose of this presentation is to focus on problems and issues involved in the education of bilingual handicapped children. Moving from reference to legislations, litigations, policies, and organizations as given in the introduction, attention will be given to (1) problems and issues centered around bilingualism and public education, (2) a proposed framework for educating culturally diverse children, and (3) implications for TED involvement in meeting the needs of bilingual handicapped children.

Before launching further into the contents of this paper, the authors wish to clarify the position taken in its formulation. First, we are not from a bilingual background and secondly, we do not claim extensive expertise in bilingual education through formal professional training. The material presented here represents what has been gathered from a modest review of related literature and an abiding concern for providing all

handicapped children with a quality education. It is hoped that as the presentation unfolds the reader will detect that all educators are encouraged to share the responsibility of educating bilingual, as well as other ethnic group, handicapped children. From this frame of reference we proceed to discuss problems and issues associated with bilingual handicapped children.

Bilingualism and Public Education

It was undoubtedly realized by the 94th Congress and President Gerald Ford that educating all handicapped children would not be easy. Providing handicapped children from linguistically diverse backgrounds an appropriate education is indeed a challenge facing special educators (Baca, 1980).

There are some very basic problems and issues centered around bilingualism and the process of educating such children. Among these problems, issues, and concerns are:

1. Group identity versus national unity
2. Use of the mother tongue versus English
3. Introducing the second language into the curriculum
4. Meeting individual needs within groups
5. Teacher preparation, and
6. Minority to minority and minority to dominant culture relationships.

Let us briefly elaborate upon some of these problems and issues. In viewing the concern - group identity verses national unity, the very role of language in a society is clearly implicated. From the national unity perspective Arsenian (1972) states that language is the reservoir of traditions, ideals, common sufferings, and proud achievements in the history of a people. Language is one of the threads which binds people together as a national group and at the same time distinguishes this group from other groups of people.

The emphasis on teaching different languages in our country, however, seems to have changed over the years.. Before mass immigration to this country teaching in the native language was popular in schools with large numbers of

immigrants. But as immigration to this country rapidly increased, in the process of "Americanizing" these individuals, English became the only language of instruction in many states and cities (Gold and et. al., 1977).

A lot is now being said about cultural groups being able to maintain their group identity. The premise often given for this position is that the policy is in accord with our principle of democracy (Arsenian, 1972) and the common theme is that cultural diversity makes for a country with richer potential (Dunfee, 1974). Through cultural diversity our lives are enriched through variety in people, life styles, dress, food, customs, leisure time activities, and fellowship with an international community.

A sense of direction is provided as a country adopts a policy on cultural diversity. Through the strengths of multiplicity we are able to use the best of humankind as we develop but the distinctiveness of various cultures should be retained without encouraging isolation, petty chauvinism, and prejudice against other groups (Gold and et. al., 1977).

Use of the mother tongue versus the use of English has many derivaties that draw attention. Some immigrants give up on their mother tongue in the process of acculturation, others see reason to retain use of their mother tongue, and still others use both languages. Rather than saying which option is best, perhaps a better quest would be to examine the outcomes derived from the various options. The main objective for giving up on the mother tongue is for reason of social adjustment and economic progress but this option stands to heighten the family-generation gap and lessen pride in cultural roots. Maintaining the mother tongue tenaciously has the inverse effect of the previous option. Sparse attention to social and economic factors in society can create a gulf between the minority group and the dominant culture.

Is it safe to say that the bilingual approach offers the immigrant the best of both worlds? Without a "yes" or "no" answer for the question, we do support the notion that no child should be expected to give up his native language and reject his parents' culture. There is too much pride to give up and too much ethnic heritage to loose in a move like that. Yet it is important that as their heritage is being preserved an understanding of the values of the dominant culture must be developed in order to participate in and profit from economic, political, social, educational, and cultural institutions of society.

Several problems are identified in relationship to the curriculum and the place of the second language in it. Among them are: What age should children be when introduced to a second language? Who should do the teaching? and What method of instruction should be used? There seems to be no general agreement as to when a second language should be introduced (Arsenian, 1972).

The age-old question of who should teach a minority group surfaces here in reference to the second language as with many other concerns. Rather than attempt to answer the question by saying a teacher of the particular vernacular or an English speaking teacher, the reader is challenged to examine the competencies listed under Teacher Preparation below as the basis for deciding who qualifies to teach bilingual children.

Instructional methods and materials should have a pluralistic focus. In so having, schools will affect community and national attitudes and behaviors toward the minority (Gold and et. al., 1977).

Children from immigrant families entering the public schools at an early age tend not to know English as well as those from American English-speaking homes. The method of instruction should reflect the distinction between the two groups. Instruction at kindergarten and lower grades in immigrant

communities should be diversified to meet the educational needs of foreign-speaking children (Arsenian, 1972).

Too often educators and the general public tend to view all persons of a cultural group as being the same in nature. Attention must be given to meeting the needs of individuals within the group. Bilingual programs within schools basically have two objectives: (1) to enable a non-English-speaking child to learn in his native language until he has mastered English and (2) to encourage the maintenance of the parent language and culture (Gold and et. al., 1977). Aligned with these objectives is the concern of helping each child within a given ethnic group to develop his or her individual potential to the fullest.

To assist teachers in becoming directors of learning for bilingual handicapped children requires a well planned program of preparation. Gold and et. al. (1977) indicated that teachers of bilingual children should (1) recognize the value of local dialects while helping students acquire American English, (2) understand the legitimacy of bilingual children trying to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage., (3) recognize the contributions of ethnic group members, (4) respect the values of ethnic groups which foster pride and humanitarian treatment, and (5) realize that diversity offers a richer potential than does uniformity. The general charge for teachers of bilingual children is to understand and accept the concept of multicultural education and implement it to the fullest in their teaching.

The final issue to address at this point is the relationship of minorities to minorities and minorities to the dominant culture. Minorities should strive to work and understand each other to support their common cause. They all need to gain sufficient representation in social and economic institutions of our society. There is no time for minorities to struggle among each other for inadequate resources. The struggle should be for a fair share

of the country's resources.

Minorities cannot afford to present themselves to the dominant culture as inferior. The former must make noble contributions to society as they struggle to gain and maintain their civil rights.

Educating Bilingual Handicapped Children

Walker and Gentry (1981) developed "A Framework for considering concerns in meeting the needs of Black handicapped children." In this section the authors will examine the major elements of that framework in terms of their implications for bilingual handicapped children. This framework approach will afford a systematic means for investigating matters essential to the education of bilingual handicapped children.

A. Cultural Background

An understanding of the cultural background of bilingual handicapped children is a necessary prerequisite to successfully teaching them. Factors to be studied in gaining this understanding might include (1) ethnic customs, (2) parental status, (3) socio-economic status, (4) societal acceptance of the group, and (5) unique traits possessed by the individual.

For those who wish detailed information on the cultural background of different ethnic and bilingual groups, Gold and et. al. (1977) presented data on the historical treatment, contributions, cultural understanding, and critical issues for nine different groups. Because of expediency no attempt is made in this document to make an indepth study of any particular group. However, a few excerpts and findings will be reported.

It was found that the name which bilingual or ethnic groups give themselves vary and have different meanings. For example, the variety of designations that Mexican Americans give themselves may include: Mexicans, Americans, Hispanos, Mexican Americans, Latin Americans, Spanish Americans, La Razas and Chicanos. Background , geographical region, and perceptions relative to

self were influential factors in identifying with a given name (Gold and et. al., 1977).

In learning a second language parental and/or socio-economic status does seem to play a role. The Hispanic and French Canadian experiences (with bilingual classes) revealed that culturally advantaged middle-class students usually have an easier time acquiring a second language than more socially deprived young people whose parents are not future-oriented (Iiams, 1977).

Achievement wise, it has been found that Hispanic students lag behind the general White population in grade school. Associate with this fact was the finding that even in states were many children have limited or no fluency in English, less than two-thirds of those children were in bilingual programs (Trends, 1981).

B. Preparation of Teachers

This topic was addressed above as an issue in the study of bilingualism. Reference was made primarily to values and guidelines to be associated with teaching bilingual children. The framework approach expands the concept to include (1) personal qualities, (2) cultural experiences, and (3) formal training.

The list of personal qualities should contain such traits as ability to understand the basic psychological needs of children, a sense of humor, ability to accept varying pupil behaviors, and a degree of creativity and originality.

Teachers preparing to teach handicapped children may not be able to have extended encounters with every type of bilingual handicapped children. But emphasis on multicultural education will create a degree of awareness of and readiness for learning about the bilingual children that she may be called upon to teach. It is suggested that though what a teacher learns about one

ethnic group may not be readily transferred to another, the attitude with which a teacher approaches one group can be generalized to apply to other groups (Gold and et. al., 1977).

One approach to examining teacher training is through program components. Sutman, Sandstrom, and Shoemaker (1979) listed the following components as part of the bilingual teacher education program:

- "Survey of literature and research related to bilingual education
- Study of the inter-relationship between language and culture and its effect upon bicognitive development
- Study of the historical development and approaches of bilingual education programs in the U.S. and in international settings
- Study of implications of congressional and legal decisions on the development of bilingual education in the U.S. and in at least one other culture." (pp. 59-60)

The program components above only include what the authors identified as Bilingual Studies. Other major categories of program components were Area Studies, Pedagogical Studies, and Language Studies.

In preparing teachers for the profession it is worthy to note that as of January 1979, teacher education institutions seeking accreditation or re-accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have to incorporate multicultural education in their teacher education programs. It is felt that as all levels of U.S. schooling become multicultural, the use of diverse assessment procedures, curriculum modes, teaching styles, and resource materials will also become more prevalent. Thus, diversity should support the maximum development of all students, regardless to their cultural backgrounds, in reaching the full achievement of their cognitive and affective potentials (Klassen and et.al., 1980).

As ethnicity and mental capabilities of children are addressed sight must not be lost of the need of persons from diverse groups to enter the teaching profession. The profession cannot remain basically white, female, middle class, and English speaking. Baptiste and et. al. (1980) cited figures showing that

in 1977 approximately 89% of the teachers in the United States were white and 17% of the student population was minority.

C. The Learning Process

The learning process may be viewed in terms of areas of learning- cognitive, psychomotor, and affective - accompanied with a cluster of appropriate teaching strategies and activities. The clusters include antecedent events - planning the instructional setting, methods, and materials; present events - implementation of stimuli, methods, and materials; and subsequent events - use of reinforcers and feedback data. It is through these areas of learning and teaching strategies that specific instructional objectives are accomplished.

In the educational arena, bilingual children need a curriculum and teachers who are sensitive to the uniqueness of their culture. A linkage must be created between the known and the unknown and respect must be shown for the individual learner. Objectives should be realistic-addressing cognitive, psychomotor, and affective needs but not necessarily in this order. There must also be shared responsibility in planning the instruction.

Teachers must realize that learning fascinates all children. The objective for managers of classrooms is to make the environment appropriate and the tasks relevant. Reward systems must also say something to the students and be at a frequency that maintains desirable performance.

The challenge is to use curricula and instructional materials that promote appreciation and acceptance of racial and cultural diversity (Gold and et. al.,1977). Examination of the events in the framework and planning, implementing, and rewarding performance accordingly will make schools fertile ground for learning for all children.

To say the least, teachers of bilingual handicapped children must possess

high personal qualities, know the cultural background of her pupils, and be trained to the extent that she can change cultural findings into learning resources within the classroom. The framework as presented in this paper is offered as an aid in assisting teaches to become more effective at working with children, expecially culturally diverse children. Actually, a profile can be drawn depicting elements of concern in the child's cultural background and the curriculum and learning process can be made compatible with his needs.

Summary and Implications for TED

The purpose of this paper was to reflect on problems and issues involved in educating bilingual handicapped children. After enumerating and briefly discussing several problems and issues attention focused on cultural background and teacher preparation as they affect the learning process needed for bilingual handicapped children. Much of the information dealt with bilingualism in general with implications for handicapped children.

Discrete answers to specific problems and issues relative to the concept of bilingualism are few. Instructional methods are not readily transferable from one ethnic group to another and of course there are very unique individual differences within any given ethnic group. This is even more complex when the different types of handicapping conditions within a group are considered. One thing found to be generalizable among bilingual individuals was an attitude of acceptance on the part of the teacher.

It is felt that TED and the teacher education profession can do several things to promote quality education for bilingual handicapped children. Included are:

1. Make bilingualism a regular item on the agenda for professional conferences, in print material, and media productions.
2. Encourage more research and discussion relative to the problems and issues concerning bilingual children.
3. Promote affirmative action in the employment of minority individuals, including positions in schools and colleges.

4. Promote the inclusion and fair treatment of ethnic groups by authors and publishers of textbooks and other instructional materials.

5. Encourage full implementation of multicultural education in teacher preparation programs.

6. Encourage effective caucus activities in the CEC Office of Minority Concerns.

7. Advocate improved services for bilingual handicapped children

8. Help to demonstrate that education is the key to the constructive use of ethnicity.

9. Make "respect based on understanding" an operational goal in fostering bilingual education.

10. Give support to adequate development of programs components for teacher training of bilingual education such as those presented in this paper.

11. Advocate that college curricula focus on the unique needs of bilingual handicapped children - thus training teachers that can deal with cultural diversity.

12. Facilitate the preparation of more bilingual persons in leadership and decision making positions in special education.

13. Take a strong position on testing and placement procedures which discriminate against bilingual handicapped children. The least restrictive environment concept must be championed by TED since many bilingual children fall victim to existing evaluation and placement procedures.

14. Fully commit its resources to meeting the educational needs of bilingual handicapped children in today's schools.

A tentative list of problems and issues relative to bilingual handicapped children was formulated and expounded upon. The suggestions and implications provided should be regarded as illustrative rather than exhaustive or perhaps as a catalyst to set the teacher's thoughts into motion. By examining problems and putting forth systematic effort toward their resolution, we can make our society more accommodating for culturally diverse groups and culturally diverse individuals will be greater contributors to society.

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